

San Antonio Independent School District  
141 Lavaca  
San Antonio, TX 78210  
(210) 554-2200

APPLICATION FOR AN INTERNAL CHARTER SCHOOL

Date: **March 19, 2018**

Name of Proposed Charter School: **Democracy Prep at Stewart ES**

Type of Internal Charter School Sought: **Campus Charter**

Primary Contact Person of Proposed School: **Katie Duffy and Jonathan Howard**

Title: **Chief Executive Officer and Vice President of Recruitment**

Address: **1950 Rigsby Ave.; San Antonio, TX 78210**

Phone Number: **(210) 438-6875**

Proposed Charter Site Address: **See above**

Grade Levels: **PK-8**

Expected Initial Enrollment: **328**      Projected Maximum Enrollment: **600**

Approximate percentage of each student population in all applicable categories:

Hispanic: 86%

White: 3%

African American: 11%

Asian: 0%

LEP: 36%

Economically Disadvantaged: 96%

At Risk: 81%

**Review and consideration of application**

**Review Dates:** September 2017 – December 2017

**Preliminary Technical Review:** September 2017

**Final Technical Review:** October 2017

**Panel Review:** December 2017

**Superintendent Consideration:** December 2017

**Board of Trustee Review:** December 2017

**Date received:** 1-18-18

**Approved:**

**Not approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning date of operation:** July 1, 2018



**DEMOCRACY PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
***APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH AN SAISD***  
***IN-DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL***

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## I. PURPOSE AND NEED

Democracy Prep Public Schools respectfully requests approval to operate a Pre-K through Grade 8 elementary and middle school at the current P.F. Stewart Elementary School (DPS) campus in order to provide access to high quality public education opportunities for traditionally underserved students, families, and communities.

In addition to incorporating the traditional attributes that researchers have proven to be correlated with improved student learning outcomes — extended school days and years, rigorous college-prep academics, ongoing use of data to inform instructional decisions and resource allocation, consistent cultural and academic expectations, and exceptional talent at all levels — Democracy Prep’s strategic vision requires the infusion of three unique elements.

First, in order to ensure that all students embark on the path to college and civic success, Democracy Prep actively recruits students at risk of academic failure — including those with English Language Learner classifications, Individualized Education Plans, and 504 plans — and consistently enrolls students in high-need subgroups in numbers greater than or equal to those of traditional public schools located in the surrounding districts.

Second, in order to restore the rightful place of “citizenship” alongside preparation for “college” and “career” as the principal aims of universal public education, Democracy Prep places an explicit focus on ensuring students possess *civic knowledge*, exhibit *civic dispositions*, and are capable of exercising the *civic skills* necessary to advocate effectively on behalf of themselves and their communities.

Third, in order to serve as a proof-point for what is possible in public education without resorting to an unsustainable reliance on private philanthropy, Democracy Prep operates each of its schools on the public funds it receives from the city, state, and federal government.

Democracy Prep does not shy away from daunting turnaround efforts or abandon scholars along the arduous path to success in college and citizenship. The Democracy Prep network provides an exceptional alternative for students and families otherwise slated to attend schools that too often do not meet their needs. Throughout the disparate regions where our schools are located, Democracy Prep has unequivocally demonstrated that demographics do not determine destiny. Two independent experimental evaluations of Democracy Prep’s innovative model have found the causal impact of attending a Democracy Prep school on student achievement to be “enormous”<sup>1</sup> and “large by any standard in education research.”<sup>2</sup> These outcomes are particularly striking given that lottery data reveal Democracy Prep applicants and admitted students to be disproportionately likely to be economically disadvantaged, classified with learning disabilities, limited English proficient, or foreign-born relative to those attending public school alternatives.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Will Dobbie, *The Impact of the Democracy Prep Public Schools*, HARVARD UNIVERSITY EdLABS (Feb. 2012) (hereinafter, “Dobbie”).

<sup>2</sup> Sean P. Corcoran and Sarah A. Cordes, *The Continuing Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools: Preliminary report*, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (July 2015) (hereinafter, “Corcoran”).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 13.

The demographics of the student population at the current P.F. Stewart Elementary will closely mirror those of the other schools in the DP network, as shown in the table below. A year-four Improvement Requirement campus in the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), Stewart Elementary School serves a student population that is 96% Economically Disadvantaged, 34% English Language Learners, 6% receiving special education services, and 95% Black or Latino. Given Democracy Prep’s track record of driving student outcomes across the country, this demographic alignment provides strong evidence that the DP model will be transferrable to the current P.F. Stewart Elementary School setting, as well as to the future middle school.

### Democracy Prep Public Schools 2017-18 Network Profile

*Turnaround schools denoted by yellow shading*

	Democracy Prep Charter School	Democracy Prep Harlem	Harlem Prep	Democracy Prep Endurance	Freedom Prep	Bronx Prep	Democracy Prep Congress Heights	Democracy Prep Baton Rouge	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus
<b>Location</b>	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Camden, NJ	Bronx, NY	Washington, DC	Baton Rouge, LA	Las Vegas, NV
<b>Year Founded</b>	2006	2010	2011	2012	2012	2014	2014	2015	2017
<b>Grade Levels Served</b>	6-12	K-4, 6-12	K-10	6-11	K-12	6-12	PreK-8	K-2, 5-8	K-12
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	685	891	810	554	874	681	648	300	1,259
<b>FRPL</b>	77%	79%	89%	87%	93%	84%	100%	96%	67%
<b>SPED</b>	18%	17%	20%	22%	14%	14%	15%	12%	8%
<b>ELL</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	1%	15%
<b>Black Latino</b>	97%	97%	97%	99%	98%	98%	98%	99%	92%

Incoming Democracy Prep students typically arrive at school lagging significantly behind grade level in core subjects and in need of dramatic interventions to approach proficiency in reading and math. Notwithstanding these challenges, Democracy Prep has established a sterling reputation for instructional effectiveness and producing breakthrough academic results. Last year, the percent of students at P.F. Stewart Elementary meeting grade level proficiency on STAAR exams was 12% in Reading, 17% in Math, 6% in Writing, and 8% in Science. With a research-proven curriculum shown to accelerate progress to mastery for low-income students, including those with disabilities and English-language deficits, Democracy Prep is well-equipped to provide students and families at P.F. Stewart Elementary School with enhanced educational opportunities and a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students, and to serve those students through middle school.

## II. MISSION AND GOALS

### *Mission*

The mission of Democracy Prep Public Schools is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. Democracy Prep has established a national reputation for producing breakthrough academic results for students historically deprived of access to quality educational opportunities. In its first decade, Democracy Prep has grown from a handful of classrooms in Harlem to a network educating over 6,800 students in five states. In that time, Democracy Prep has not only maintained our quality of programming and commitment to serving all students regardless of socioeconomic status, special education

classification, or the academic level at which they enter our schools, but it has also become both more effective and more inclusive.

The Democracy Prep campus at the current P.F. Stewart Elementary School will be organized to maximize school impact and quality. Students will learn in a “small school” environment where they feel valued and receive the attention they need to meet or exceed proficiency. Both the elementary and the middle school will be equipped with Academic Collaboration Teams to ensure Special Education and ELL students receive necessary services. DPS will increase student achievement through continuous assessment of student progress and the use of data to plan future instruction. Since literacy is the key academic ability on which future skill and knowledge acquisition is based, a strong emphasis will be placed on literacy — a core commonality among high-performing schools nationwide, particularly at the elementary level. The rigorous Democracy Prep curriculum will align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards, accelerating progress and mastery for students to be competitive at a national level, so our scholars will be prepared to attend and graduate from college.

Students will benefit from a strong, clear code of conduct based on the Democracy Prep DREAM values of Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability, and Maturity to ensure a safe, orderly, and joyful school culture. DREAM values create a school environment in which scholars, including those with special needs, are supported at the highest levels to achieve academically. Democracy Prep schools also emphasize students’ character development to prepare them for higher education and to be leaders in their communities. DPS will meaningfully engage families to encourage investment in their children’s education with detailed programs to establish and maintain a positive relationship between school and home.

The Democracy Prep’s approach and school design emulates other high-performing urban schools serving similar students with disabilities, language proficiency barriers, and/or special circumstances that put them at risk for academic failure. Democracy Prep’s academic program will be rooted in research-proven curricula that have been shown to accelerate progress to mastery for low-income students, including those with disabilities and English-language deficits. Democracy Prep’s elementary staffing approach in the Lower Academy (Grades PK-2) employs a Lead Teacher (a veteran, highly effective master teacher) and Teaching Fellow (a new teacher who is often participating in a teaching residency through a local university or Relay or is a Teach For America Corps member) in every classroom. The Upper Academy (Grades 3-5) places 1.5 faculty members in every classroom. In both Academies as well as in DPS middle schools, there exists an inclusive, heterogeneous educational approach that serves all students in a manner that maximizes their academic potential and prepares them for success in the college of their choice and in a life of active citizenship.

*Goals (Tentative Performance Contract Metrics)*

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall develop a charter School Performance Framework by which all charter schools and programs will be evaluated. The SPF will inform district decisions related to campus replacement, restart, or closure.

Performance objectives may include, but not be limited to student proficiency, academic growth, and college readiness. Additional objectives as well as a timeline may be developed for charters established at campuses that do not meet state accountability standards.

**The Office of Innovation staff will meet with the principal and/or school operator to establish baseline metrics in the Fall of year one to finalize the tentatively approved Performance Contract metrics.** OI staff will monitor, evaluate, and publish campus performance annually, the results of which will determine whether the charter will be placed on probation, revoked, or renewed on a three or five-year cycle.

### **Academic Excellence**

Objective: *DPS students' academic performance will meet or exceed local and state standards.*

- By 2020, the percentage of DPS students testing at proficient levels on STAAR assessments will meet or exceed the percentage of SAISD students reaching proficiency.
- By 2020, the percentage of DPS students reaching proficiency on the STAAR assessments who were not proficient in the prior year will meet or exceed the percentage of SAISD students reaching proficiency who were not proficient in the prior year.
- By 2020, DPS will receive a State Accountability Ratings of “Met Standard.”

### **Organizational Strength**

Objective: *Leadership at DPS will further the school mission, program, and goals and will act strategically to ensure adequacy, alignment, and coherence of actions.*

- DPS will have a teacher satisfaction rate that meets or exceeds district average.

Objective: *DPS will provide quality educational programs that enable all students to achieve academically and socially.*

- Each year, DPS will have an average daily student attendance rate of at least 95%.
- Each year, DPS will have a student mobility rate no greater than 10%.

Objective: *DPS will meaningfully engage families to establish and maintain positive relationships between school and home.*

- DPS will have a parent satisfaction rate that meets or exceeds the district average.

### **Financial Health**

Objective: *DPS will be a well-run organization capable of achieving long-term success.*

- DPS will operate core educational programs sustainably on dependable public funds and will maintain a balanced budget and stable cash flow.

## **III. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

### *Curriculum*

Democracy Prep’s academic program is rooted in research-proven curricula that have been shown to accelerate progress to mastery for low-income students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners. The core academic program provides more time, and frequent evaluations ensure that teachers and families know exactly where each student stands and what each student needs to do to make progress. Democracy Prep has built consistent instructional

systems to ensure that all teachers have the necessary tools to increase student achievement. Democracy Prep's strong curricular focus on skill mastery is delivered in a manner that maximizes time on task across an extended school day and school year. Structured, highly organized learning environments are reinforced by consistent practices that promote continuity and predictability across all classrooms.

Literacy is the key academic skill on which all future skill and knowledge acquisition is predicated; to build reading comprehension, students need a deep knowledge base in order to apply skills such as drawing inferences and conclusions. Facets of Democracy Prep's academic program that closely reflect the findings of the National Reading Panel include dedicating significant time to teaching reading and writing, explicitly teaching phonics and comprehension strategies, and fostering fluency through extensive practice reading and writing.

Instruction is based on the fundamentals of education outlined by E.D. Hirsch in his *Core Knowledge* series using highly effective, research-based curricula. Teachers use clear, direct instruction to explicitly teach what students are expected to know at all grade levels, and in turn, students are given opportunities to demonstrate mastery of all content and skills learned.

The Democracy Prep Math curriculum is designed to help students recognize that they need basic factual knowledge and "automaticity" with procedural computation, coupled with a deep conceptual understanding in order to solve complex mathematical application problems.

At the Pre-Kindergarten level, DPS will follow Head Start performance standards to operate a program that meets Federal and TEA requirements of a high-quality preschool program.

Democracy Prep elementary schools' schedule and curriculum are built upon the following activities and core courses:

**Morning Work:** Scholars will be given a targeted assignment to be completed as they arrive and eat breakfast. Examples include math fluency practice, correcting an exit ticket, or spiraled review.

**Morning Meeting:** Teachers plan meaningful conversations and activities based on class needs in order to foster community building. This time will occasionally be used for civics lessons. As a grade team, teachers may also decide to use this time for re-teaching or reviewing content that was particularly difficult for scholars or to prepare for an upcoming assessment.

**K-2 Math Meeting:** This block loosely follows the *Every Day Counts* curriculum. During this time, scholars engage in routines that build fluency and automaticity in counting, geometry and measurement, problem solving, and calendar math.

**Math:** Democracy Prep uses the *Eureka Math* curriculum. Teaching mathematics as a "story," *Eureka Math* builds students' knowledge logically and thoroughly to help them achieve deep conceptual understanding. Each lesson is comprised of fluency practice, an application problem, concept development with a daily problem set, and a student debrief. Scholar work with concrete manipulatives and pictorial models build to fluent and confident use of algorithms.

**Problem Solving:** During this block, scholars are encouraged to use any strategy to solve a problem of the day, and teachers lead a discussion in which scholars share their solutions. This block is based on Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), an approach to learning and teaching elementary school mathematics that builds on a child’s natural problem-solving abilities. Teachers craft questions and curate discussions to help scholars learn from one another as they develop problem solving strategies.

**K-2 Reading Mastery:** Scholars engage in a complete basal reading program that uses direct instruction to help students master essential decoding and comprehension skills. Program materials include fully scripted lessons to guide teachers through carefully constructed instructional steps: modeling new content, providing guided practice, offering individualized practice and applying skills. It also utilizes a special orthography designed to help students identify letter sounds. The special font is later phased out and replaced with traditional orthography. Signals and group responses are used to keep students involved, help them stay on task and help with lesson pacing.

**Reading Skills:** In this block, scholars will receive skill instruction aligned with the TEKS standards using engaging, complex texts from a wide range of genres. Teachers model skills and gradually release responsibility to scholars using a variety of scaffolds and routines. Network-provided lesson plans and materials for Reading Skills draw from Democracy Prep’s homegrown reading comprehension program in K-2 and Curriculum Associates’ *Ready Reading* program in K-5.

**Guided Reading:** Reading lessons are flexible, small group sessions that allow the teacher to target aspects of reading with which students need the most support according to STEP assessment data. Guided reading lessons address specific student needs while providing greater reading independence. Teachers analyze STEP data, choose an appropriate text for each group, and plan lessons by scripting questions to target one or more specific focus skills. During the lesson, teachers prompt students during and after reading, and facilitate a comprehension-focused conversation to discuss what was read.

**K-2 Read Aloud:** Scholars build vocabulary and content knowledge as teachers model expressive and enthusiastic reading, in addition to “thinking aloud” in order to verbally model reading skills. Teachers ask a variety of questions to target student needs and spark lively discussion. Text selection is based on teacher and student interest, current events, or genres and themes with which scholars need more practice.

**3-5 Novel Study:** Scholars will closely read celebrated novels such as *Charlotte’s Web*, *Bud Not Buddy*, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Teachers model expressive and fluent reading as well as engaging scholars in class texts and independent reading. Through class discussion and written reflection, scholars work to answer “focus questions” that authentically meet the demands of TEKS reading and literature standards. Non-fiction selections will be incorporated to facilitate further growth in background knowledge and vocabulary.

**i-Ready:** This computer-based program facilitates individualized online instruction in reading and math. The i-Ready platform combines an adaptive diagnostic and growth measurement, a targeted assessment of grade-level standards, and individualized instruction.

**Social Studies:** The Social Studies curriculum at Democracy Prep is based on the units of study set forth by the Alexandria Plan. Each unit asks an essential question that scholars will work to answer by developing enduring understandings about topics from geography to history to government. Lessons engage scholars with authentic non-fiction texts, videos, and simulations to build deep content knowledge about the world around them.

**Science:** The Science curriculum at Democracy Prep is loosely based on Pearson's *Interactive Science* units of study and enhanced to meet the demands of the Next Generation Science Standards. Scholars in each grade study life science, earth science, and physical science to master content that increases in complexity each year. Every unit includes at least one laboratory investigation and numerous opportunities for hands-on learning in addition to non-fiction reading, live demonstrations, and web-based interactive learning.

**Writing/Grammar:** Scholars begin the writing block with handwriting or grammar practice, depending on grade level. Next, scholars engage in shared and independent writing, following the steps of the writing process to publish writing across genres over the course of the year, producing narrative fiction, literary essays, informational texts, and persuasive letters. During each lesson, teachers model writing within a genre or prompt scholars to notice features of mentor texts. Scholars are then given time to work on their own pieces.

At the middle school level, course offerings across the network include English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, Art, and Physical Education. The DPS Middle School curriculum will be college preparatory and aligned with TEKS standards. In Social Studies, Science, Music, and Art, DPS teachers will rely on a content-rich curriculum of basic subject-area and cultural knowledge.

**Civics:** DPPS staunchly believes in principles that have been central to public education since the establishment of the first public schools: that American democracy cannot endure without an educated citizenry; that all students deserve to become informed and proud participants in American self-government; and that every generation must prepare the next to understand, protect, and perfect the institutions of American freedom. Consequently, DPPS cultivates civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions in our students. By strategically infusing history content into the reading curriculum, incorporating Socratic seminars, oral presentations, and group discussions into the syllabi, and thoughtfully reducing the amount of teacher talk-time in classrooms, DP schools, beginning at the elementary and middle school levels, work to develop poised public speakers who not only *can* lobby their elected officials, deliver oral testimony on the record at public hearings, and participate in Get Out The Vote campaigns, but in fact *must* do so in order to receive a Democracy Prep high school diploma.

***Speech and Debate:*** Democracy Prep’s heralded Speech and Debate program has received international acclaim.<sup>4</sup> Among the accolades compiled by DP students at invitational competitions across the country are a first-place finish by two Bronx Prep high school students in the Duo Interpretation Competition at the 2015 National Speech & Debate Tournament in Dallas, and awards for performances at the Yale, Stanford, Harvard, and Columbia National Invitational competitions and the New York State Championships in 2015-16. The Speech and Debate program was a signature feature of Bronx Prep’s model that DPPS not only preserved after being engaged as a turnaround provider in 2014 but amplified and expanded across network schools. Preparation for engagement in Speech and Debate begin with a rigorous middle school English Language Arts and History curriculum.

***Arts:*** Democracy Prep views arts education as central to student engagement. DPPS has developed a robust program that utilizes in-class and enrichment offerings — including comprehensive written middle school exams. STEP, musical theater, dance, and jazz bands — to engage students, build character, and reinforce concepts being taught in core subjects.

Democracy Prep believes that a universally designed curriculum is the most efficient and effective way to provide access for a broad range of students with diverse needs. This approach guides the full inclusion of students with disabilities, from the layout of classrooms and common areas, to the differentiated curriculum, to the routines and rituals of daily school life. This approach is proven to help students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers to achieve greater academic success.

Democracy Prep’s instructional model will incorporate supports for all students struggling academically, not just those with disabilities. All students falling substantially below grade level in reading and math — regardless of classification — will receive increased attention through small-group instruction, individual tutoring, and other intensive academic supports designed to accelerate their academic growth. Democracy Prep will also provide appropriate accommodations to all students progressing through the initial evaluation process prior to confirmation that the student is disabled and eligible for special education services.

#### *The Academic Collaboration Team*

DPS teaching staff will be supported by Academic Collaboration Team (ACT) personnel to serve students at academic risk, including but not limited to Special Education students and English Language Learners. ACT personnel may be assigned to specific grades, subject areas or to a particular caseload of students based on what will be the most educationally-effective model for the needs of students, including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), in any given year. ACT personnel will be responsible for implementing classroom-based IEP services and integrated co-teaching services, as well as ensuring access to the general curriculum for all students with IEPs through differentiation, accommodations, and necessary modifications. Classes that are co-taught will be led by at least one general education teacher and an ACT teacher. Approaches to co-teaching will include:

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., The Guardian, *From the Bronx to Yale: the Power of “Speech”*, available at

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/video/2016/jan/18/speech-bronx-yale-high-school-video>.

- Direct co-teaching – Both teachers lead the class in direct instruction, seamlessly switching from one teacher to another at different points during the lesson.
- Parallel teaching (Unmodified curriculum) – The class will be divided into two groups. Each teacher instructs his group in the same lesson at the same time.
- Parallel teaching (Modified curriculum) – The class will be divided into two groups. Each teacher will instruct his group using materials specifically designed for those students. Direct instruction will occur simultaneously. This methodology will be used based on the demonstrated academic needs of students with IEPs. The modified curriculum will seek only to differentiate the presentation of instructional material; it will not modify the standards being presented, and students will still be evaluated using the same assessment system.
- Rotational teaching (Alternative teaching) – Both teachers will co-plan a set of lessons. One teacher will lead direct instruction for the unit of lessons while the other teacher supports students who have not yet met standards according to formative assessments, focusing on students with IEPs.

The models listed above may be used interchangeably throughout the year based on the academic and social and emotional needs of the students in the integrated co-taught classes. ACT teachers will meet regularly with general education teachers to review instructional materials, plan the presentation of content, and ensure lessons contain accommodations that facilitate access for students with IEPs.

### *English Language Learners*

In its first year, DPS will operate an English as a Second Language/content-based program that will provide native language supports needed for students to achieve mastery of content area standards, as well as proficiency in English. As DPS evaluates the specific needs of its student population and community, the school will implement a more robust and comprehensive dual language and/or bilingual program as needed. ELL students will have access to all curricular and extra-curricular activities available to all other students. Current demographics indicate that the largest population of ELL students will be native Spanish speakers; therefore, DPS will make all efforts to recruit staff members who are proficient in Spanish. In addition, professional development for school staff will be tailored to support the bilingual development of DPS students and to encourage and preserve the culture of the DPS community. If a language is spoken that no DPS staff members can write or speak, DPS will supply translation services for both written and verbal communication.

Recent data reviews and collaborative efforts have informed Democracy Prep Public Schools' network-wide actions to train core content teachers, coaches, and instructional leaders in the application of ELL-targeted strategies. In addition, systematic updates to translated materials are provided by the network's Curriculum Team in support of ELL achievement. To improve cohesion in classroom strategies and to review cultural expectations for school staff, professional development will foster stronger working relationships between classroom teachers and ELL staff/bilingual teachers. ELL scholars scoring within remedial ranges on English language acquisition assessments will be grouped into skill-specific ELA academic intervention groups and issued specific tutoring in the areas of marked need in skill-specific development. On a trimester basis, all *Entering* and *Emerging* students will be issued assessments to monitor their progress with

interventions, and professional development for staff will be based on the results of these internal assessments. Academic progress will be communicated to families of ELL students as part of a larger effort to ensure they have access to and are informed of Democracy Prep instructional practices, and efforts to educate families on best practices at home will be made via afterschool supports and homebound services.

### *Acceleration*

Democracy Prep is committed to serving students most at risk of academic failure, and the demographics of our student populations reflect this institutional prioritization. Nevertheless, the instructional program provides sufficient differentiation to accommodate the needs of those who enter above grade level in reading and mathematics. Democracy Prep’s mastery-based curriculum, in addition to myriad enrichment opportunities, enables all students — including accelerated learners — to benefit from a learning experience tailored to their specific needs.

### *Social-Emotional Supports*

Democracy Prep schools provide a full suite of services to respond to the social and emotional needs of our scholars and their families. All campuses include a community of social workers, behavior support specialists (DREAM Coaches), Advisors, Family Impact Coordinators, and ACT personnel who provide scholars with the social and emotional support they need to focus on learning. Often, this begins with proactive supports such as providing students non-mandated/at-risk counseling with a focus on social-emotional learning and character development. In addition, Democracy Prep schools utilize McKinney-Vento liaisons that serve as a vital bridge, connecting the school to helpful resources that minimize barriers for any scholars experiencing homelessness. During enrollment, the liaison will collect a residency survey from each family to ascertain scholars’ housing status. Collectively, Democracy Prep schools create a culture in which scholars can thrive, regardless of their housing status, and scholars know that there are adults in the building whom they can trust as advocates.

Democracy Prep recognizes that all students, regardless of whether they are classified as at-risk, learn at varying rates. Schools that expect all students to meet high standards must be prepared to support them — regardless of the pace at or style in which they learn — until they reach mastery. At Democracy Prep, this support comes through clear, engaging, quality lessons; increased learning time; pull-out and push-in instruction and related services such as counseling, speech, and occupational and physical therapy; and mandatory after-school and Saturday program tutoring for students who require additional individual and small-group attention. These strategies and supports ensure that students with disabilities, students with limited English language proficiency, and students at risk of academic failure who may not have an official classification are provided with the remediation and intervention they need to meet the high standards at Democracy Prep.

## **IV. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall develop a charter School Performance Framework by which all charter schools and programs will be evaluated. The SPF will inform district decisions related to campus replacement, restart, or closure.

Performance objectives may include, but not be limited to student proficiency, academic growth, and college readiness. Additional objectives as well as a timeline may be developed for charters established at campuses that do not meet state accountability standards.

**The Office of Innovation staff will meet with the principal and/or school operator to establish baseline metrics in the Fall of year one to finalize the tentatively approved Performance Contract metrics.** OI staff will monitor, evaluate, and publish campus performance annually, the results of which will determine whether the charter is placed on probation, revoked, or renewed on a three or five-year cycle.

*State Accountability*

Implementation of the State Accountability System will follow all TEA Guidelines and policies for the required state assessments. No variances are requested from the current implementation of the accountability system by SAISD, outlined in the Management Agreement between SAISD and Democracy Prep (or its Texas affiliate) to be executed no later than Spring 2018.

*Evaluating Student Performance*

Democracy Prep is committed to demonstrating objectively that scholars are exposed to and mastering a rigorous curriculum and preparing for success in college. In order to accomplish this goal, Democracy Prep schools measure academic progress extensively and precisely using a wide variety of ongoing assessment tools. In addition to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and privately developed assessments, pre-test and post-test assessments developed by the schools and network are frequent, relevant, and aligned with state standards. In tandem with the Democracy Prep Academics Team, Democracy Prep schools have redesigned internal assessments to ensure that classroom teachers are blind to the exams, mirroring state testing conditions and preventing teachers from gearing instruction toward the exam. The robust evaluation and assessment system at Democracy Prep ensures that all scholars who enter the school are routinely monitored to ensure that they are making continuous academic progress.

The following assessments directly inform each Democracy Prep elementary school’s intervention strategies, tutoring groupings, curricular program design, professional development offerings, and daily classroom structures:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>STEP</b>	The University of Chicago Urban Education Institute’s Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) Assessment assesses student literacy achievement and progress in reading from grades K-5. STEP is a nationally-normed reading assessment that provides teachers with ongoing data about student reading proficiency and growth.
<b>Bi-Monthly Writing Assessments</b> <i>K-1 only</i>	On a bi-monthly basis, Democracy Prep will provide students with writing prompts and use specific rubrics to diagnose student writing strengths and deficiencies.

<b>Interim Assessments</b> <i>2-5 only</i>	Our 2nd-5th graders take Interim Assessments, developed from the i-Ready standards mastery tool, every six weeks to assess mastery of standards taught in reading and math.
<b>Unit Assessments</b>	These are network-created assessments that are administered to check student understanding after the completion of a unit. Teachers administer Unit Assessments every four to six weeks.
<b>Exit Tickets/ Quizzes</b>	These are teacher-created assessments that provide real-time data to guide quick interventions and re-teaching of topics during a unit.
<b>State Exams (STAAR)</b> <i>3-5 only</i>	State tests will be administered on paper or computer each spring.
<b>MAP Assessment</b>	This exam is nationally normed and adaptive. The test adjusts to the scholar's level to provide the most accurate data possible. Additionally, it allows for comparison between Democracy Prep scholars and scholars across the nation. This test is administered once in the fall and once in the spring of each school year.

**At the middle school level, student achievement will be measured using a combination of formative and summative internally developed, privately developed, and state-mandated assessments.** DPPS uses six-week interim assessment cycles to assess student mastery. Following each assessment, teachers analyze student performance data, identify which standards are causing the most difficulty, and create six-week “reteach” plans to address these deficiencies in conjunction with the preexisting scope and sequence for that time period. Additionally, middle school teachers use interim assessment data to create tutoring groups and to help determine which students receive push-in assistance from instructional support personnel during class periods.

## **V. GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING PLAN**

### *Governing Body and its Duties*

The SAISD Board (the “Board”) will be the authorizing entity for the in-district charter schools and, pursuant to Texas statute, will contract with Democracy Prep Texas, a Texas not-for-profit affiliate of Democracy Prep (The Management Agreement). Democracy Prep will be held responsible for meeting the goals for academic achievement, organizational viability, and fiscal health set forth in its charter. The Board will:

- Periodically review the academic, financial and operational viability of the schools operated by Democracy Prep;
- Review the school’s academic and other policies;
- Provide for a process of administrative review of instructional and disciplinary decisions rendered by school administration;
- Approve an annual budget, and evaluate annual audits;

- Ensure appropriate financial controls over accounts in which school funds are housed;
- Develop and review performance under the charter.

The Board will delegate to Democracy Prep and school leadership at DPS responsibility for managing day-to-day operations and hold them accountable for achieving the academic, operational, and financial targets outlined in its charter. The Board will routinely evaluate the schools' performance, and is committed to ensuring that students of DPS receive a complete educational program based on the requirements set forth in the school's charter and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Pursuant to 19 TAC Section 97.105, the SAISD Board will have sole responsibility for and will ensure that Democracy Prep will have authority to:

- Appoint the Chief Operating Officer of the school;
- Employ and manage all staff of the school without regard to any existing district employment agreements for any staff currently at the school, including authority over hiring, firing, assignment, evaluation, development, advancement, compensation, and continuation and establishment of any and all terms of employment;
- Approve the assignment of any other district employees on campus;
- Make all curriculum decisions beyond the minimum requirements under Texas law;
- Subject to SAISD as the LEA, develop all Special Education programs and ELL programs, as well as programs for at-risk students;
- Set the calendar and daily schedule including an extended day and extended year;
- Approve all non-required assessments under Texas law;
- Set class sizes, conference periods, and hours of service;
- Set and develop the campus budget(s); and
- Control the majority of the educational programs.

#### *Policies and Waivers*

Pursuant to Texas regulation and statute, the Board will provide Democracy Prep with exceptions to existing policies and waivers to the fullest extent of the law including, but not limited to policies regarding class size, conferences, curriculum and instruction, and professional development.

#### *Community Involvement*

Upon being approved as a school operator, Democracy Prep will conduct community-at-large meetings at various times to reach as wide a swath of parents as possible. Democracy Prep will then cross-reference the sign-in sheets from those meetings with the parent directory for the current school year and conduct a phone bank to make initial contact with those who could not be in attendance. Subsequently, Democracy Prep will work to schedule home visits with all parents who could not attend one of the community meetings in order to demonstrate its intent to re-enroll all students currently in the building. The goal will be to reach every family within the first two to three months of being selected as a new school operator. Oral and written communication to families of students identified as English Language Learners will be translated into each family's native language to the extent possible to ensure clear and rich communication and coordination between home and school.

To bolster its family and community engagement efforts, DPS will have at least one school-based Family Impact Coordinator (FIC). The FIC's primary responsibility is to build lasting relationships with families through engagement at every point in the Democracy Prep student's experience, from enrollment to attendance. FICs implement programming that creates space for parents to formulate suggestions, share experiences with other parents, and participate in decisions relating to the education of their children. The FIC's programmatic responsibilities will include some or all of the following:

**Family Leadership Councils**– The Family Leadership Council (FLC) is the family involvement organization at each Democracy Prep school. The responsibility of the Family Leadership Council is to promote family involvement, to advocate politically for our community, and to support the school, the scholars, and their families. The FLC organizes volunteer opportunities and creates ways to support scholars' academic and civic achievements. The FLC has monthly meetings on the school campus and maintains various committees (e.g. Advocacy, Planning, Safety, School/Home Life) to facilitate family involvement with the school. With the assistance of a school staff member, the FLC will be family-led.

**Parent Drop-In Days** – Parent Drop-In Days allow parents to come to campus to observe classes. Parents are split into several groups based on the grade level of their scholars. A pre-observation norming session will be held to set guidelines and expectations for classroom visits. A post-observation debriefing will also occur to explain classroom rituals and routines and to solicit parent feedback. In preparation for the debriefing, staff provide parents with a one-page document on which to record their observations. These meetings are held just before or after the end of a trimester, and staff is responsible for notifying parents prior to each session.

**Coffee & Conversation** – Coffee & Conversation sessions are informal and informational in nature. At these meetings, the school leadership team will make presentations on relevant topics and field questions from families in attendance. Coffee & Conversation sessions will be organized either on a monthly basis or exclusively during months in which Parent Drop-In days are not held.

### *Communication*

Democracy Prep is committed to encouraging families to contribute to the academic success of their scholars. As such, Democracy Prep uses a variety of methods of communication with families, which include regular progress reports, emailing lists, and an automated phone system.

**Regular Progress Reports:** A progress report that includes academic and behavioral updates as well as a brief overview of important school events.

**Emailing Lists:** Parents may receive email messages including electronic copies of letters, fliers, and forms as well as school and grade level announcements.

**Automated Phone System:** Parents may receive a pre-recorded message from Democracy Prep for the following reasons:

- to issue school-wide reminders and updates;
- to alert families to weather-related school closings;
- to notify families that their scholars have been assigned after-school detentions;

- to remind families of important documents requiring signatures; or
- to inform families of meetings for parents or scholars.

Family communication and involvement will be immensely important to building school culture and achieving the school’s mission. Contact with families will be frequent and primarily positive, and weekly newsletters will inform families about upcoming events and important dates. Each student will have an Advisor who serves as the primary point of contact for 12 to 13 families. The Advisor will speak with each family at least once every two weeks and report areas of growth as well as areas for improvement.

Lines of communication between the school leadership team and the Charter Management Office will also be robust. The elementary and middle school Campus Directors will check-in regularly with the Superintendent Team and will interface directly with the leaders of the various network departments. The regional Executive Director will work with the network’s Recruitment team to establish and execute plans for sourcing talent, the network’s Human Resources team to address high-level personnel questions, and the network’s Community Impact team to develop a vision for engaging parents and other local stakeholders in the life of the school. An Assistant Regional Superintendent will coach Campus Directors and teachers, and will receive direct support from network curriculum specialists. Operations staff will have access to support from the network School Support, Informational technology, and Data teams. Just as significantly, the network has created a host of platforms and professional development opportunities for campus-based personnel across Democracy Prep schools to collaborate directly on common issues, creating a true community of professionals committed to optimizing the educational experience of all Democracy Prep scholars.

## **VI. ENROLLMENT AND WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES**

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall develop regulations, procedures, guidelines, and timelines for enrollment into all Choice Schools and Programs. Choice Schools and Programs include in-district charters, magnets, and early college high schools.

As a district choice school/program, Democracy Prep at Stewart will follow district policies and administrative procedures for the enrollment and withdrawal of all students.

Staff from the Office of Access and Enrollment Services will meet annually with the campus principal to review admissions criteria and establish the number of seats available for enrollment in each grade level.

## **VII. PEIMS REPORTING PLAN**

DPS will follow SAISD’s administrative procedures and policies for PEIMS reporting.

## **VIII. DISCIPLINE PROGRAM AND PROCEDURES**

In order to foster a school culture conducive to scholarship and citizenship, Democracy Prep strives to maintain a safe and orderly environment for students, teachers, and staff. Democracy Prep will

not allow students who engage in disruptive behavior to interfere with the education of their peers. Therefore, each instance of misbehavior will result in the imposition of an appropriate consequence. Consequences may vary based on the age and grade level of the student, the severity of the incident, and the frequency with which the incident occurs. Such consequences may include:

- Scholar reflection on community violation;
- Removal of school privileges (including school trips, in-school privileges, etc.);
- Lunch or after-school detention;
- Community service on or off-campus;
- In-school suspension;
- Short-term out-of-school suspension; and
- Long-term out-of-school suspension.

It is the school's job to ensure families understand disciplinary policies and procedures. Those concepts are communicated through the following avenues:

- New scholar enrollment;
- Family Orientations;
- Student Orientations (Prep Academy);
- Coffee and Conversations;
- Official school notifications; and
- Ongoing informal communication and meetings with staff, scholars, and families.

Democracy Prep strives to keep scholars in school and in classrooms. When a scholar's actions are detracting from the ability of others to learn in a safe, value-added environment, it may be necessary to remove the scholar temporarily from the classroom and — if negative behaviors persist — from the school. If the consequence of a scholar's behavior involves him or her being sent home or suspended for any period of time, a parent or guardian may be asked to meet with an administrator regarding the scholar's behavior prior to his or her return to school. Suspended scholars who are sent to school notwithstanding the consequences outlined in their suspension letters will receive escalating consequences for failure to comply with school-imposed consequences.

Democracy Prep trains and requires teachers and school leaders to take measures to prevent scholars from being removed from the learning environment. Teachers are expected to consistently implement preventative discipline strategies, to enforce consequences evenly and fairly, and to communicate regularly with scholars and their families to keep them apprised of a scholar's social-emotional progress. The leadership team is expected to analyze data regarding behavior incidents and to determine the appropriate course of action needed to ensure fair and equitable application of the disciplinary system. Additionally, school leaders are charged with discerning trends from disciplinary data and implementing proactive measures to prevent behaviors that lead to increasingly severe consequences.

While Democracy Prep aims to remain consistent in the implementation of its behavior system, behavior plans are customized in an attempt to help scholars succeed. Consequences are tailored to the severity and frequency of the unacceptable behavior. Both the severity of consequences and the scope and depth of structured, proactive support provided by Democracy Prep staff to troubled

scholars will increase, commensurate with the severity and frequency of the violations. As the consequences become more severe, the school leader will notify and seek the involvement of the family to help design and implement response plans.

Violence directed towards other scholars or staff will lead to the most serious consequences. All scholars facing out of school suspension are entitled to due process. The scholar can be removed from the school immediately if he or she poses a threat to others or the school environment. In appropriate circumstances the scholar may also be referred to law enforcement authorities. The most serious consequence, if all else fails and in extraordinary circumstances, will be expulsion from Democracy Prep. Consistent with SAISD's Student Code of Conduct, a scholar facing expulsion and his or her parents or guardians will be afforded all due process protections required under applicable laws and regulations including a full and fair hearing.

## **IX. SAFETY AND SECURITY**

DPS will follow current SAISD administrative procedures for safety, security, and emergency evacuation as outlined in the Emergency Response Guide.

## **X. FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

### *Facilities*

Democracy Prep at Stewart Elementary (DPS) will use the existing district facilities currently used for P.F. Stewart Elementary School.

### *Maintenance Plan*

DPS will use the SAISD maintenance plan which includes scheduled cleaning, landscaping, and repairs.

### *Transportation*

DPS will serve primarily as a neighborhood school and will follow established SAISD transportation policies and administrative procedures.

## **XI. EMPLOYMENT PLAN**

### *Qualification and Classifications of Employees*

Democracy Prep teachers are results-driven educators with experience in, and commitment to, standards-based curricula and the use of data and assessments to drive instructional decisions. The Democracy Prep network is committed to exclusively employing teachers who have demonstrated quantifiable and objective student performance gains that surpass local averages and are proven managers of urban classrooms who have used discipline, structure, appropriate incentives, and high expectations to achieve measurable academic and civic success. A bachelor's degree is required of all teachers, and certification in subject area, as well as experience teaching in an urban school district, is preferred.

Each Campus Director or Principal will serve as the instructional leader, responsible for managing the policies, regulations, and procedures to ensure that all students are supervised in a safe learning environment that furthers the mission of the school through the use of approved curricula. Inherent

in the position are the responsibilities for scheduling, curriculum development, extracurricular activities, personnel management, emergency procedures, and facility operations. The Campus Director must have a clear track record of raising student achievement in an urban classroom for at least two years, as well as 3-5 years of experience managing and leading a high performing organization.

#### *Compensation and Benefits*

Teachers at Democracy Prep are treated as professionals, provided with all necessary technology (computer, phone, voicemail, email, etc.), appropriate classroom supplies, a personal professional development budget, and essential support at all times. In order to incentivize longevity and reduce turnover, teachers receive a competitive benefits package that improves over time and are eligible for merit-based raises based on the results of their formal year-end evaluations. Democracy Prep teachers and leaders are guided by explicit, well-defined career paths and are afforded ample opportunities for growth.

#### *Recruitment and Selection Procedures*

As a wealth of research has found that teacher quality is the best and most reliable indicator of student academic performance, Democracy Prep maintains an extremely selective staff application process. Democracy Prep recruits from a national pool of educational talent and casts a wide net for outstanding teachers through traditional and non-traditional recruiting channels, which include graduate school on-campus recruiting, career fairs, job postings, mailings, informal networking, Idealist, Teach For America alumni recruitment, and word-of-mouth. Democracy Prep's existing selection process includes recording information from an online application, demo lessons, and one-on-one interviews.

#### *Hiring and Dismissal Procedures*

Employment with Democracy Prep is "at will." Either the employee or Democracy Prep may terminate employment at any time for any reason, with or without prior notice, and with or without cause. Democracy Prep may terminate employment immediately without notice if an employee demonstrates misconduct, exhibits consistent unprofessional behavior, violates Democracy Prep's policies and procedures, or demonstrates unsatisfactory job performance. Under certain circumstances, including but not limited to funding reductions, enrollment changes, and program changes, an employee may be laid off, or a position may be eliminated. In those circumstances, Democracy Prep will make efforts to furnish the employee with at least thirty days of prior notice.

#### *Process for Handling Employee Complaints*

In the event of a problem or dispute with other personnel, an employee may submit a complaint in writing following the process described below. Careful documentation is the key to a successful process. All documentation will be included in the employee's personnel file.

1. The employee will make a good faith effort to work with the immediate person at issue to resolve any conflict. This effort will consist of identifying the problem, suggesting possible solutions, selecting the resolution, setting the process for implementation of resolution, and scheduling a follow-up. Upon a determination by the employee that the conflict has not been resolved, the employee must submit a written complaint to the Campus Director within five working days.

2. The Campus Director will attempt to mediate the issue with the parties involved within five working days. Should the Campus Director be unable to resolve the issue, the Campus Director will write a report of his/her findings and submit that to the Democracy Prep Human Resources Team along with the original written grievance.

3. If the issue is not resolved by the Democracy Prep Human Resources Team, after a good faith attempt as outlined above, the Senior Vice President of Human Resources may submit the grievance to the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO may render a decision within 15 working days.

Democracy Prep strongly urges the reporting of all incidents of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should file their complaints with their Campus Director or Democracy Prep Human Resources office as soon as possible and before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive. Employees who believe that they have witnessed unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should report the incident and the names of the persons involved to their Campus Director or Democracy Prep Human Resources. Complaints and reports may be submitted anonymously if the individual feels uncomfortable using his or her name. Supervisory employees who fail to report to the Campus Director or Democracy Prep Human Resources any incidents or complaints of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation of which they are aware will be subject to disciplinary action. Employees who have experienced conduct they believe is contrary to this policy have an obligation to take advantage of this complaint procedure. An employee's failure to fulfill this obligation could affect his or her rights in pursuing legal action. Federal, state, and local discrimination laws establish specific time frames for initiating a legal proceeding pursuant to those laws.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. Employees must cooperate with any investigation by providing full and truthful information relevant to the investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practicable.

## **XII. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PLAN**

### *Financial Controls*

Pursuant to the Management Agreement with Democracy Prep Public Schools, the Democracy Prep Finance Team will be responsible for overseeing all functions of financial management for DPS. Democracy Prep is committed to developing and maintaining fiscal policies and procedures that ensure sound internal controls and accountability in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and Financial Accounting Standards Board rules and regulations. Democracy Prep's Fiscal Control Structure is defined by the fiscal policies adopted at the Board level that are then implemented through an explicit set of procedures or practices. This combination of policies and procedures ensures efficient use of resources and helps to safeguard each school's assets by reducing the potential unauthorized use of assets or misstatement of

account balances. On a day-to-day basis, the control structure will allow DPS to process, record, summarize, and report financial information, as per the requirements of internal and external monitors.

Democracy Prep, with support from the school leadership, will help prepare reports and documentation in a timely and thorough manner. Democracy Prep will advise and assist the Board in maintaining the school's status as a tax-exempt organization under federal and state law, such that contributions to the school are tax deductible to the donor for federal income tax purposes. In addition to assistance with budgeting, Democracy Prep will help establish accounting policies and procedures, manage accounts payable and accounts receivable, and assist with program analysis.

#### *Audited Financial Statements*

At the close of each fiscal year, the Authorizer will receive audited financial statements from the school's auditor in which any findings or management notes, potential changes to how the financials are presented, internal controls that might be modified, and the overall health of the charter are discussed. Democracy Prep has and will continue to adhere to the recommendations furnished as a result of any independent audit. Most recently, Democracy Prep strengthened our internal controls to ensure the timeliness and completion of reconciliations to general ledgers, and the efficient management of student files. A newly added Staff Accountant position at the CMO now oversees items such as the monthly, quarterly, and year-end close routines, accruals, and prepaid expenses.